

Re-thinking programme-based learning outcomes

The need for students to develop skills and values that transcend the modular structure of programmes is becoming increasingly clear, with the recent work on professional competencies¹ a case in point. The obvious way to make these skills and values explicit in the curriculum is to identify appropriate programme-level learning outcomes, and to ensure that those learning outcomes are assessed appropriately. As well as the professional competencies, two areas for which signposting at programme level would be beneficial both to us as an institution, and to students, are inclusivity² and sustainable development goals (SDGs)³ (see Appendix). It is noted that employability and inclusivity are scrutinised in TEF, and although sustainability is not yet explicitly included it is implicit in some of the TEF criteria and descriptors. Curriculum mapping will be enabled by new software included in the e-assessment business case.

- (i) Does TLC endorse the aspiration to identify professional competencies, evidence of inclusivity and SDGs as programme-level learning outcomes in all UoN programmes?
- (ii) Are there other areas that should also be included?

Proper consideration of these areas and their incorporation into the curriculum requires programme-level design. For existing programmes in some Schools this may require a change in mind-set away from that of the (piecemeal) module convenor and towards the (holistic) course director.

- (iii) For new programmes TLC is asked to consider whether templates could be developed that explicitly ask for evidence (in the form of learning outcomes that are appropriately assessed) that professional competencies, inclusivity and SDGs have been incorporated appropriately. It is suggested that these learning outcomes should span multiple modules, rather than being embedded in individual modules.
- (iv) TLC is also asked to consider how best to ensure that existing programmes develop appropriate learning outcomes that transcend the modular structure.

A focus on programme-level learning outcomes also begs the question whether we should be moving towards programme-level assessment, which links to the “Institutional Objectives for Assessment” paper presented to TLC in February 2019. Further work on the details will be undertaken should the principles be endorsed by TLC.

[Text redacted] May 2019

Appendix: (i) UCL inclusivity check list, (ii) UN sustainable development goals

¹ Professional Competencies in the Curriculum, N. Thambar, September 2018.

² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/2018/may/new-checklist-helps-staff-rate-inclusivity-their-programmes>

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>